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Does New Trier Township Wish to Have Junior High Schools?

Question Prompts Analysis by Member of High School Board

This is the fourth of a series of articles on educational matters written by Herbert B. Mulford, well-known civic leader, an authority on public finance, taxation, and education problems, and a member of the board of education of New Trier Township High school.

By Herbert B. Mulford

Does New Trier township wish junior high schools?

In the second article of this series, when the question of the desirable size for New Trier Township High school was discussed, it was indicated that one outlet for excess pupils might be the definite remanding of ninth grade pupils to the elementary schools, which in turn might be organized on the junior high school basis. The purpose of this paper is to suggest what this would mean and the possible ways and means of arriving at such a system.

First, it is necessary to define terms. A good many parents think we have junior high school procedure now; but this is not wholly the case. Such systems are usually known and identified by a series of number. For instance, 6-3-3, means that the first six or elementary grades are separated, both as teaching units and usually as physically housed, from the second three grades (the seventh, eighth and ninth) which are in turn separated from the tenth, eleventh and twelfth, usually known as sophomore, junior and senior years of the senior high school. Sometimes it runs 6-4-4, which means that the second group of four grades (seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth) are separated from the junior and senior years of the senior high school, which in turn are joined by the first two years of a junior college. Again, when circumstances do not permit the above mentioned set-ups, the divisions may be made on the 5-3-4 basis. Still again, the division may be 6-2-4.

Based Upon Theories

All these divisions are made upon educational theories that the child changes sufficiently around the fifth or sixth year in school to make it desirable to separate him from the under graders, and that the impact of the somewhat abrupt change from the eighth grade to senior high school is cushioned by having the ninth and even the tenth grades withheld from senior high school to continue with the lower grades in junior high school. There are sufficient arguments on both sides of the case as to desirability of junior high schools to necessitate mentioning that in our township are authorities who have had experience in both types of schools, and some of these hold that the under graders are benefited more by the junior high school than are the ninth or tenth graders by withholding them from the senior high school.

However, this may be in theory or practice is not the purpose of this article. Rather our job is to state the legal and financial problems bound up in the project of the physical change.

Cites Existing Systems

At present the only situation strictly comparable to a junior high school is at Winnetka, where Skokie school houses and teaches the sixth, seventh

and eighth grades. In Wilmette the seventh and eighth grades are departmentalized in the Arthur H. Howard school, which houses other grades, but on the east side they are separated in Central school. In Kenilworth, the sixth, seventh and eighth grades are departmentalized and in Glencoe they are partially departmentalized. In all these cases it would seem that the pupils are reasonably adjusted to the change, so that when they go on to New Trier there is no difficulty of adjustment. However, in all cases but Kenilworth the ninth graders would be very welcome.

Ten or a dozen years ago the question of change was discussed by the educational heads of all the school systems in the township. At that time the set-up considered was 6-3-3. This would have meant the remanding of the ninth grade to the local village schools. The late Frederick Clerk, then superintendent of New Trier Township High school, was favorably inclined toward the idea, but he felt the responsibility of the ninth graders should continue to be that of the high school. This seemed impracticable with the superintendents of the village schools, and the subject was dropped. On that occasion the subject had been raised wholly from the educational point of view.

Now the question has been raised by the board of education of the high school primarily from the physical housing point of view and not from any sense that the inclusion of the ninth grade in the present high school arrangement is in any way undesirable educationally.

States Physical Aspects

In these circumstances, why is there any hesitation over the change for the general consensus of opinion seems to be that the change is desirable? The matter is essentially one of finance—of tax rates or tuition. At present the high school is making levies of taxes to cover the usual four years of teaching, and the grade schools levy their taxes for the eight elementary grades. During the depression all elementary systems found it sufficiently difficult to raise money through the sale of tax anticipation warrants for the grades now being operated not to think it possible to take on another grade, aggregating more than six hundred pupils, without having the taxes that now support such pupils in the high school. On the other hand, the recent rapid expansion of the high school, with new buildings primarily financed by bond issues, has brought about certain legal handicaps to any hypothecation of taxing power for buildings, bonds or interest. For instance, when a bond issue is spread against a school district, all the property of that district is pledged as security for the repayment of the loan with interest, and no part of the district can be alienated without still being subject to the bond contract and the taxes to settle it. Similarly no part of the building tax rate of the high school could be given over as such to any grade school. Moreover, it is generally conceded that the numerous technicalities of paring part of a rate so as to give one fraction of it to one district and a different fraction to another, would be so complicated that it probably could

not be accomplished, even were it lawful.

How Finance Extra Load

One might ask why the grade schools could not increase their levies so as to provide enough funds for the added pupils and let the high school reduce its levies accordingly. This, indeed, could now be done within certain limits—if the limits were not too rigid to frustrate the movement. And this has to do with legal tax limitations.

At present the normal maximum taxing rates of any school district in Illinois are \$1.50 per \$100 of valuation for educational purposes (operating expenses primarily) and fifty cents for building purposes, which include bond and interest requirements as well as outlay for physical buildings and grounds. It would not be very difficult to arrange for teaching expenses alone, were it not for the physical equipment to accommodate such a large addition to pupil enrollment. Probably in all villages new buildings or additions would be required at once or within a short time to accommodate the suggested changes in plan. This would immediately put a heavy load on every elementary district embracing the change, both for teaching and for construction. Could the grade districts finance this load?

Here are the tax rates applied for the several elementary districts on the bills just collected for the 1935 tax levies:

Wilmette	Kenilworth	Winnetka	Glencoe
\$1.91	\$1.16	\$2.23	\$2.00

Rate Increases Suggested

In the case of Wilmette the available taxing power might be as much as one-third of the amount needed for teaching, etc., alone, without considering buildings. In the case of Kenilworth there would be ample taxing power. In the case of Glencoe on the face of things there is no additional power, for the district now taxes the normal limit. In the case of Winnetka all but 7 cents of the extraordinary full limit has been used. In this latter situation it should be explained that in addition to the maximum limit cited above, a district can, under special emergency legislation, avail itself of an increase, by referendum and go to an educational rate of \$1.80 instead of the normal maximum of \$1.50. This privilege will expire July 1, next. Winnetka went to this higher limit by referendum in June of 1935. Should any of the other local districts wish to enjoy junior high schools, it might be well for them to take advantage for the lapsing law and increase their potential rate by thirty cents, even if they should not make use of the provision in actual tax levies. It is quite obvious that districts can be trusted not to go beyond the bounds of reason, for Kenilworth even now could increase its school tax load by more than 70 per cent within its present limits.

What Are Possibilities?

What are the desires and possibilities of the elementary districts themselves? Kenilworth does not wish to change its present system of 5-3-4, largely because the high school is so close to that community. Kenilworth also wishes the high school to continue to accept ninth grade pupils as at present.

On the other hand, about two years ago the board of education of Glencoe formally put New Trier High school on notice that it wished the ninth graders and the money that educates them. The idea in Glencoe is to build a new school so as to accommodate the additional pupils by

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